

Thereupon, at 12:30 p.m., the Senate recessed until 2:15 p.m.; whereupon, the Senate reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. GRAMS).

AFRICAN GROWTH AND
OPPORTUNITY ACT—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Carolina.

AMENDMENT NO. 2379

(Purpose: To require the negotiation, and submission to Congress, of side agreements concerning labor before benefits are received)

Mr. HOLLINGS. I call up my amendment No. 2379 and ask the clerk to report it.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from South Carolina [Mr. HOLLINGS] proposes an amendment numbered 2379:

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. . LABOR AGREEMENT REQUIRED.

The benefits provided by the amendments made by this Act shall not become available to any country until—

(1) the President has negotiated with that country a side agreement concerning labor standards, similar to the North American Agreement on Labor Cooperation (as defined in section 532(b)(2) of the Trade Agreements Act of 1979 (19 U.S.C. 3471(b)(2)); and

(2) submitted that agreement to the Congress.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Carolina.

Mr. HOLLINGS. Mr. President, the amendment has been read in its entirety. It is very brief and much to the point. It is similar to the North American agreement on labor. When we debated NAFTA at length, there was a great deal more participation and attention given. In these closing days, everyone is anxious to get out of town. Most of the attention has been given, of course, to the appropriations bills and the budget, and avoiding, as they say, spending Social Security after they have already spent at least \$17 billion, according to the Congressional Budget Office.

I ask for the yeas and nays on the amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is not a sufficient second.

Mr. HOLLINGS. Mr. President, I had a very interesting experience with respect to labor conditions in Mexico prior to the NAFTA agreement. I wanted to see with my own eyes exactly what was going on. I visited Tijuana, which is right across the line from southern California.

I was being led around a valley. There were some 200,000 people living in the valley, with beautiful plants, mowed lawns, flags outside. But the 200,000 living in the valley were living

in veritable hovels; the living conditions were miserable.

I was in the middle of the tour when the mayor came up to me and asked if I would meet with 12 of the residents of that valley. I told him I would be glad to. He was very courteous and generous.

I met with that group. In a few sentences, summing up what occurred, the Christmas before—actually around New Year's—they had a heavy rain in southern California and in the Tijuana area. With that rain, the hardened and crustified soil became mushy and muddy and boggy, and the little hovels made with garage doors and other such items started slipping and sliding. In those streets, there are no light poles and there are no water lines. There is nothing, just bare existence.

They were all trying to hold on to their houses and put them back in order. These particular workers missed a day of work. Under the work rules in Mexico, if you miss a day of work, you are docked 3 days. So they lost 4 days' pay.

Around February, one of the workers was making plastic coat hangers—the industry had moved from San Angelo to Tijuana. They had no eye protection whatsoever. The machines were stamping out the plastic, and a flick of plastic went into the worker's eye. The workers asked for protection and could not get any. That really teed them off.

It came to a crisis on May 1 when the favorite supervisor, a young woman who was expecting at the time, went to the front office. She said she was sick and would have to take off the rest of the day. They said: No, you are not taking off the rest of the day; you are working. Later that afternoon, she miscarried, and that exploded the movement of these 12 workers. They said: We are not going to stand for this anymore. We are going to get some consideration of working conditions and pay.

The workers chipped in money and sent two of the folks up to Los Angeles to employ a lawyer. They discovered that when the plant moved from San Angelo to Mexico, they filled out papers showing how the plant was organized and that they had a union and swapped money each month, but no shop steward or union representatives ever met with them. They never knew anything about a union.

Under the work rules of the country of Mexico, if one tries to organize a plant once one is already organized, then that person is subject to firing, and all 12 of them were fired. They lost their jobs, their livelihoods. That is what the mayor wanted me to know and understand. They were out of work.

My colleagues talk about the immigration problem. If I had any recommendation for the 12, I would say: Sneak across the border—don't worry

about it—and find work in California or South Carolina or some other place because they could not get a job any longer in the country of Mexico.

That concerned me, and I have followed the work conditions. That is one of the reasons with NAFTA, while I opposed it, I wanted to be sure we had the side agreements. The side agreements were established. The work center is in Dallas. The Secretary of Labor meets with them. They are trying to work on this problem.

I have references to some of the working conditions in El Salvador.

On March 13, 1999, five workers from the Doall factory, where Liz Claiborne garments are sown, met with a team of graduate students from Columbia University who were in El Salvador conducting a study of wage rates in relation to basic survival needs.

A few days later, all five workers were fired. Doall's chief of personnel simply told them: You are fired because you and your friends cried before the gringos, and the Koreans don't want unionists at this factory.

So much for workers' rights in that Liz Claiborne plant.

There are 225 maquila assembly factories in El Salvador, 68,000 workers sending 581 million garments a year to the United States worth \$1.2 billion. Yet there is not one single union with a contract in any of these maquila factories because it is against the law; it is not allowed.

This is Yolanda Vasquez de Bonilla:

I was fired from the Doall Factory No. 3 together with 17 others on August 5, 1998.

From the beginning, the unbearable working conditions in the factory impressed me a great deal, which included obligatory overtime hours every day of the week, including Saturdays and sometimes Sundays. On alternate days, we worked until 11 p.m., and some weeks we were obligated to work every day until 11 p.m. at night. We were mistreated, including being yelled at and having vulgar words used against us . . . humiliated for wanting to use the restrooms, and being denied permission to visit the Salvadoran Social Security Institute for medical consults.

The highest wage I received, working 7 days a week and more than 100 hours, was 1,200 colones (U.S. \$137). Nevertheless, I accepted all this that I have briefly narrated since I have two children who are in school and I must support them.

They go on to tell similar stories time and again about different workers at that plant in El Salvador.

With the limited time I have, I will reference the United States firm in Guatemala City of Phillips-Van Heusen.

Van Heusen closed its Camisas Modernas plant in Guatemala City just before its 500 workers were to receive their legally mandated year-end bonuses and go on a three-week break.

That is typical of what they do if they get any kind of benefits at all. Just at the end of the year, when they are supposed to get their bonuses, they go down and close the plant.